

A Serious EXHORTATION to
REPENTANCE: N^o 15

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the
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By *JABEZ EARLE*, D.D.

L O N D O N,

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ZECHARIAH vii. 13.

*Therefore it is come to pass, that as
he cried, and they would not hear;
so they cried, and I would not hear,
saith the Lord of Hosts.*



THE connexion of these words
you will easily observe by read-
ing the context; and I shall
have occasion to refer to it in
the sequel of my discourse, and
therefore shall immediately enter upon what
I design, in the following plain method.

I. CONSIDER the *cries*, or calls, of God
by his messengers to a sinful people.

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II. THEIR

A Serious Exhortation

II. THEIR *not hearing him.*

III. THE *cries of such a people* to God in their distress.

IV. HIS *not hearing them.*

I. CONSIDER *God's crying* to a sinful people. And here it is proper to take notice of the matter and the manner of his call.

I. THE *matter.* This is included in one general comprehensive word, *repentance*; the import of which is expressed in a variety of phrases, signifying the same thing, of which none are more suited to convey the full idea, than those of the prophet *Isaiab*, chap. i. ver. 16, 17. *Cease to do evil, learn to do well.* It is also represented by *turning*. The conduct of our life being frequently called our way, and sinners going wrong (upon which account they are called *transgressors*) repentance is returning to a regular manner of life. Upon which account, that which in the original *Hebrew* is *disposing* one's way, our translation properly renders *ordering the conversation aright*, Psal. l. 23.

OF the use of this manner of expression the Scripture is full, and it is needless to mention

tion particular texts; as it is to observe other forms of speaking, which, tho' founded in variety of metaphors, are synonymous, or exactly equivalent: such as *washing, making clean*, and the like. This turning is what our divines call *conversion*, and very properly, to express the sense of the *holy men of old*. And our *Catechism* describes repentance as a turning from sin unto God; justly representing the sense of the evangelical prophet, Isa. lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, &c.*

AND as we are called to repentance in general, we find frequent exhortations to the particular instances of it, in reference to the two great branches of our duty, which Christ calls *the two commandments*, Matt. xxii. 40. viz. *love to God* and our *neighbour*. The holy writings are full of instances in relation to each. That people to which the prophets were immediately sent, were prone to idolatry and superstition, to an impious contempt or depravation of divine *institutions*; and how frequently are they called to correct their management in this respect? And when they were more observant of God's ordina-

ces of worship, they lived in a notorious contempt of *social* duties, and indulged themselves in horrid impurities. Upon this account they are perpetually challeng'd by the Spirit in the prophets, and warned to reform. It would be endless to cite particular passages in other prophecies, I shall confine myself to this where my text is. And I need go no farther than the chapter from which I have taken it. The seventy years captivity had indeed cured them of idolatry; but how did they manage in the *worship* of God? We find them charg'd, that in their solemn *fasts* they acted an insincere and *hypocritical* part. Their *indevotion* was scandalous, even in their nearest approaches to God: Their lives proved it, and their consciences convicted them of it; and therefore the Searcher of hearts expostulates with them upon it, *ver. 5. Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?* And it follows, *ver. 6. When ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?* Their *feasts* (and no wonder) were no better than their fasts: Their lusts were gratify'd, and the poor neglected; and in their general behaviour *oppression, cruelty* and *malice* were scandalously abounding. Therefore
 God

God called by his prophet, saying, *ver. 9. Execute true judgment, shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother, and oppress not the widow or fatherless, the stranger nor the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.* This is the matter of God's call to finners: Repentance in general, and the particular instances of it, according as we have more eminently offended against the rules of devotion, purity, justice, and charity. The sum of which we have in the apostle's words, where he represents it as the voice of the gospel, that *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world; Tit. ii. 12.* I am to consider,

2. THE manner of this call. And here I shall only take notice of one circumstance, *viz. the earnestness* of it, which seems intimated, I think, in the expression *cried*. The call of the great God must necessarily infer *condescension*; as he is ready to forgive the returning sinner, it is all *goodness*; and a God of truth cannot deal deceitfully, so that the *sincerity* of his call is unquestionable: But the *earnestness* of it deserves particular notice. It is observed, *ver. 7.* that the Lord *cried* by
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former prophets, *when Jerusalem was in prosperity*; and, *Jerem. xxix. 19.* he speaks of *rising up early*, and sending his servants. And how much he had their reformation and safety at heart, appears by the variety of messengers he sent, the various methods he used, and the long patience he exercised; and particularly by the affectionate and vehement expressions with which he inspired them that were sent to warn them. In how lively images does he represent their sin and its consequences? *Isa. i. 4. Ab sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger.* And *ver. 21. How is the faithful city become an harlot!* With what vehemence does he beat them out of the refuge of lies! *ver. 11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?* What a terrible representation does he make of the calamities in which their obstinacy would issue! *Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire, your land strangers devour it in your presence, &c.* So *ver. 28. to the end.*

How convincingly does he sometimes justify his own conduct, and silence every plea
they

they might be supposed to make, even their own consciences being judges! *Isa. v. 3. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard, what could have been done more, &c?* So *Jer. ii. 5. What iniquity have your fathers found in me?* So *Ezek. xviii. 25. Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?*

How strongly does he expostulate! *Jer. xiii. 27. O Jerusalem, wilt not thou be made clean? when shall it once be? what will ye do in the end thereof?* So *Ezek. xviii. 31. Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* See *Isa. i. 2. Jer. xlv. 4.*

How affectionately does he represent his desire of saving them, and his unwillingness of destroying them! *Ezek. xviii. 32. I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. And ver. 23. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?*

How low does he condescend as to the terms of forgiveness! *Jer. iii. 12, 13. Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you - - - Only acknowledge thine iniquity, &c.*

How

How unwilling does he express himself to destroy! *Hof. xi. 7. My people are bent to backsliding from me ; tho' they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him --- How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?*

AND to shew his earnestness in pleading with his people, he represents himself as pitying those whom he cannot spare; *Psal. lxxxi. 13. Ob that my people had hearken'd unto me.*

I HAVE mention'd all this, to represent the earnestness with which God calls sinners to repentance. As my subject led me, I instanced in passages out of the old prophets; to all which that of *St. Paul*, the great apostle of the new dispensation, is fully equivalent, *2 Cor. v. 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconcil'd to God. Fallen sinners must return to God through Christ the Mediator, and can only hope to be accepted through him.*

II. I am to consider sinners *not bearing* God, when he thus earnestly calls to repentance. The meaning of this is evident; *not bearing* is

is not obeying. In the common use of language, superiors are not heard when they are not obey'd. Men may indeed, in the full and proper sense, refuse to hear; and this is the practice of too many: they will not come within the sound of divine words: they resolve not to mind, and so will not be spoken to; for this reason they absent themselves from the *public assemblies*, and if they have the word of God in their *houses*, it lies by neglected and unopen'd. But tho' men read and hear too, yet if the end of God's speaking is not answer'd, he is not heard to any valuable purpose. Thus that people to whom the antient prophets were sent, are said *not to hear with their ears*, because they would not *convert and be healed*; *Isa. vi. 10.* Their management is strongly represented in *Ezek. xxxiii. 30.* *They speak every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as a people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness, &c.* And sometimes to
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their neglect they added scorn; as it's charg'd upon them, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misus'd his prophets.* With this our Saviour charges them, *Luke xiii. 34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, &c.* However, merely giving God's word the hearing, is insufficient without obedience: Wherefore Christ says, *Matt. vi. 24. Whofoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, &c. and John xiii. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* And his apostle James, *ch. i. 22. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.* Repentance is the end of God's call; and if that end be not answered, the call is not heard.

III. I AM to consider the *cries of such a people* to God in their distress. It is indeed possible, and may be supposed, that sinners may be harden'd to that degree, as not to seek relief from God in the day of their visitation; but it is usually and generally otherwise. God says of this people, *In their affliction they will seek me early; Hosea v. 15.*

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Accordingly it was their practice, as we find in the history; particularly in the *book of Judges*, chap. iii. 15. iv. 3. And indeed this is the voice of nature; as appears from the mariners in *Jonah*, chap. i. 6. *What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.* Indeed it is so natural, that when a sudden evil surprises, our very indeliberate thoughts are directed to God, and our applications to him often prevent our formed reasonings. Thus the greatest strangers to prayer, will oftentimes, without a form or monitor either, lift up their eyes to God, and utter words expressing their expectations of his help, when a sudden danger threatens, or an unexpected storm arises. This is beautifully represented in the cviith *Psalms*, where that expression so often recurs; *Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble.* This happens especially when the case is out of the reach of common methods: when they cannot help themselves, and have none else to do it: when, as it is in *Job* xix. 13. *their brethren are far from them, and their acquaintance are estranged; their kinsfolk fail, and their familiar friends forget them;* or, as

David faith, when *help faileth*, and no man careth for their soul, *Pfal. cxlii. 4.* especially when death makes swift -- sensible advances, *physicians* appearing to be of *no value*, and there weeping friends are *miserable comforters*.
 ---- I need not enter farther into particulars; in such cases men must be very stupid indeed if they did not cry to God.

IV. LASTLY, I am to consider *God's not hearing* the cries of such people in their distress, as would not hear him when he called them to repentance. And under this head I shall offer my thoughts in the following particulars.

I. THIS is not to be understood as *absolutely declarative* of the event in the present world; for facts are contrary. There have been many instances of a good and gracious *God's* hearing the cries of such in their distress, as had turned a deaf ear to his calls in their prosperity. We read in the forecited *cviith Psal. ver. 17.* that *fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted*; and *ver. 19. then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, he saveth them out of their distresses.* And something of this kind

kind is matter of almost daily experience, and is to be accounted for from the merciful nature of God, *who is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy, Psal. cxlv. 8, 9.* Or as *Jonah* expresses it, *chap. iv. 2. He is a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.* And hence we are to account for his being *kind to the unthankful and the evil, Luke vi. 35.*

IT is true in some such cases there are lower degrees or semblances of repentance. As in the case of *Nineveh*, to which the words of *Jonah* refer; and in that of *Ahab*, *1 Kings xxi. 27, 29.* when he heard the judgments denounced by *Elijah*, he *rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and fasted, and went softly*; upon which God said to his prophet, *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days.*

AND sometimes the design of providence is by afflictions to bring men to repentance. This is indeed the design of all his fatherly corrections. But I mean, in this method he actually

actually accomplishes his saving purposes. This is represented by *Elisha*, *Job xxxiii. 27.* He looketh upon men, and if any say, *I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light*; and he then adds, *ver. 29. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man.* An eminent instance of this we have in *Manasseh*, who was taken among the thorns, and bound in fetters, and carried to *Babylon*. And it is said, *When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly, and prayed, and God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom.* And it is remarkably added, *Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God*; *2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 12.*

AND I apprehend, that in most conversions, where the objects of mercy have been grievous offenders, and notorious criminals, fore afflictions have been the means of opening their ears to discipline. The voice of the rod has prepared them for the voice of the word; and God has spared mens lives from going down to one pit, in order to save their souls from a worse.

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So that, upon the whole, it cannot absolutely be affirm'd, that God never hears such in their distress as had before refused to hear him. And this I might illustrate from the instances of his dealing with this very people to whom my text refers; particularly as we have it in that part of their history before referr'd to, *viz.* the *book of Judges* - - - But I shall wave it.

2. IT is to be understood, however, of what they may *reasonably expect*: That if they will not hear God, he will not hear them. To this purpose he has declared himself in his word; and the declaration is just. Whatever reserves sovereign goodness may have made, the equity of this general appointment is incontestable, and ought to regulate our expectations. If God be so good as to call sinners to repentance in such a manner as I have represented, and they refuse him, can they have any reason to expect that in their cries for help they shall not be denied? This matter may be safely referr'd to every man's own conscience; which, if it may be heard, will give it against the sinner. Who will say it is *not just with God* to neglect those who thus slight him? And *shall not the God*
of

of the whole earth do right? Can any other be expected? Whatever God may do sometimes while we are in a state of probation, we are not to expect that he will not resent our unworthy treatment of him. This is intimated in that expostulation with this people, which we find *Judges* x. 10. When the children of *Israel* cried to the Lord under the oppression of the *Ammonites*, he answers, *Ye have forsaken me, and served other Gods, wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go cry unto the Gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation*, ver. 13, 14.

3. As it is what they may reasonably expect, so it is what we have *many terrible examples* of in this present state. I might instance in the old world, who *repented not at the preaching of Noah*; God spared them for a hundred and twenty years, but at last *the flood came and destroy'd them all*. We may well imagine, that, when it was too late, they saw their error: No question they cried to God in their inconceivable distress, but it was to no purpose; no more than if they had begg'd the rain to stop, or the sea to retire. God was as inexorable as the fierce element; as deaf to them as they had been

to

to him. I might also represent the case of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and of the seven nations of *Canaan*, &c. but I chuse to take notice of his dealing with his own people. The ten tribes were carried into a captivity from whence they never returned, and are no longer a people. The other two, after many warnings, and longer patience, were at last given into the hand of the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword, in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17. And what was the reason of this? you have it, ver. 16. *They despised his words, and therefore his wrath rose against 'em, till there was no remedy.* And tho' after seventy years a remnant returned; yet, returning to their old course, wrath came upon them to the uttermost, having filled up the measure of their sin, by killing our Lord Jesus. In forty years after which, *Jerusalem* was laid waste, with such a desolation as made the compassionate Jesus weep at the prospect of what he foretold: And the account their own historian gives of it is the most shocking that ever was read; and hard must the heart be, that can

read it without uncommon emotions. *Luke* xix. 41.

THESE accounts indeed are national. But consider, that the nations consisted of individuals, and the public calamity was private ruin.---But I might mention the case of particular persons. To say nothing of *Cain*, to whom God himself preach'd the gospel; but as his heart was hard to repent, his punishment was too great to be born. *Saul* is a remarkable instance: God had given him many calls (and there were some occurrences of providence in his life which 'one would have thought might have melted a rock) but he harden'd his heart (like *Pharaoh*) and what was the consequence? when he *enquired of the Lord, the Lord answer'd him not*, 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. And his account of the matter is very affecting, ver. 15. *I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and the Lord is departed from me.* Poor *Saul*! to what a shift was he driven, and what was the success? The pretended *Samuel's* answer was, *Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, when the Lord is departed from thee, and become thine enemy?* ver. 16. and the tragedy ended in the saddest manner. His army was routed, his

his three sons killed, and himself wounded; and at last, to prevent an imaginary or slighter evil, he committed the greatest, *i. e.* self-murder; and so (like *Judas* after him) he went to his proper place. I have singled out this instance of divine severity; but, except in some peculiar circumstances, it is far from being singular. Witness the frequent self-murders, which, tho' generally ascribed to luxury, are the effect of worldly sorrow, oftentimes, wrought up into despair, and issuing in distraction. Men have broken their constitutions, wasted their estates, wearied their friends, in methods displeasing to God, and contrary to his warning, and then apprehending themselves forsaken of heaven, plunge into hell for relief. Unhappy wretches! that might have found mercy at last for another world, if not for this, had they heard the rod and him that appointed it.

BUT if things are not carried to this dreadful length, how common are other terrible examples! Let us consider the frequent public executions, in which human justice is the minister of divine. Let us turn our minds to the incurable diseases, pressing necessities, and open shame, which is so ordinary an effect of

rebelling against God. --- Let me read the moving representation of the whoremonger's case in *Solomon's Proverbs*, ch. v. 9. *Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel : Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labours be in the house of a stranger, and thou mourn at last, when thy flesh and body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? Could I represent the remediless temporal evils into which multitudes plunge themselves, by not hearing God's earnest calls to repentance and reformation, as the matter deserves, surely it would affect the most hardened. But this none can do but the Spirit of God ; let us beg of him to fasten it upon the imagination of mens hearts, especially the young and unexperienced, that they may not bring themselves into those distresses, even in this life, out of which no prayers will help them. Tho' their souls should be saved, yet the destruction of the flesh is unavoidable. God will not be intreated to turn back their captivity. They must die under the effects of their own folly ; and perhaps too, under despair of finding mercy after death. *Spira's* case was not a singular instance, tho' there*

were

were some circumstances in it extraordinary. Many, I believe, have died in despair, tho' providence has not made them a public example. Oh, *that men would hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly!* May the instructions we have known affect us!

4. HOWEVER it may be at present, there is *a time coming when this will be universally and eternally the case*: That God will not regard their cries, who have not minded his; how long soever his patience may be protracted, it will have an end. Whatever instances of paternal goodness he may express to the rebellious and disobedient, there is a day at hand when their own prayers and others intercessions will avail no more than breath against the wind. He may spare them *one year and another*, possibly to a century; but still the *sinner of an hundred years old is accursed*, and when mens *iniquities are full*, the sentence shall go forth, *Cut it down*, and nothing shall interpose to prevent the immediate execution.---Death, a necessary end, will come at the appointed time; and then the *strongest cryings and tears* to him (who is indeed *able to save us from death*) will not avail for an hour's respite, tho' a soul depends upon it. The *Psalmist* observes, xlix. 7, &c.
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They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption, &c. It will be in vain to cry, and promise, and vow. Time's past, and the decree gone forth, and the sentence irreverfible:

AND from the moment of an impenitent's departure, his case is abfolutely desperate. Down he muft among the *ſpirits in priſon*, and there be *referved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs to the judgment of the great day*. And when that day comes, the final ſentence will paſs, *Go, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*: As ſure as the goſpel. I cannot ſay, whether, upon the departure, the miſerable wretches will cry for mercy; and therefore ſhall not repreſent what would make a ſhocking ſcene: But this I am ſure of, their petitions would be rejected, and that with ſcorn; according to that, *Ye ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof; I will alſo laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh*. And tho' it be the dreadfulleſt truth in the whole liſt of certainties, and the hardeſt ſaying that was ever uttered, yet ſo
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it will be, so it must be, for the *mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*. The faithful and true witness has spoken once, yea twice, and more ; *There the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, Mark ix. 48. The goodness, grace, and mercy of God towards such as hear and obey, will be no more matter of admiration to all eternity, than his severity towards those despisers who shall wonder and perish for ever : For infinite wrath, as well as infinite love, equally swallow up thought. I can have nothing more solid to support

An EXHORTATION

NOT to *despise* the cries, the earnest calls, of God, when he urges to repentance, and beseeches to be reconciled, and I shall urge this matter to the best advantage I can. The *terrors of the Lord* have already been set before you ; and no account can be given of their not influencing your conduct, but their not being *believed*, or not *considered*. Which is our case ? Do we deny the revelation ? Are we so well satisfy'd that the prophets of old did not speak as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost*,
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and that *Christ spake of himself*, and that the word which his *apostles* preached was merely human, that we can venture our souls upon this persuasion, that the scriptures are a *cunningly devised fable*, and all its denunciations against obstinate sinners an innocent noise, which may frighten the weak, but should not move the wise? Are we very sure that there is no future state, nor judgment-day appointed, in which God will render to every man according to his works? This would account for our living as we list, and despising the voice of our teachers. But I am persuaded there are few, if any, who are arrived at this plerophory, or full assurance of infidelity; and have no reason to think I have any such in this audience. It is more common for people to be in *suspense*. Men who are not willing to reform, are very apt to hope, and very desirous to believe, that God is too good to make any man miserable, especially for ever. But is it wisdom to set the partial opinion of a bias'd mind, against strong probability and plain facts? The evidences of religion are supported by arguments which an unprejudiced mind cannot resist. The matter of fact, that Christ was *raised* from the dead, and in consequence his doctrine

doctrine from God, has all the attestation such a matter can admit. If it be said, that no miracle can assert any thing unworthy of God, what assurance have we, that this of sinners being punished with everlasting destruction, is contrary to the nature and perfections of the divine Being? Are we satisfy'd that he is not infinitely just, as well as merciful? and do we not see in fact the terrible appearances of it? Recollect the instances I mentioned under another head. Some degree of severity must be consistent with infinite mercy, as appears from his daily administrations; and who can say to his justice, hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther? The argument from boundless goodness, as some men wou'd manage it, I think, infers, that there should be no evil in this world, no more than in the next; and we know that those arguments which prove too much, prove nothing at all. But I have a word to these people in suspense; it is what has been said often, *viz.* that virtue is the *surest* side. I know indeed by whom this argument has been ridiculed; but I know too, it has never been answered: And what has misled such as have objected against it, I apprehend to be their not distinguishing
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between *demonstration* of truth, and *determination* of one's conduct in dubious cases. I think in good reasoning this is the *safest* way, therefore I'll take it; and a wise man wou'd certainly chuse that conduct in which there is least hazard; especially where there's no proportion in the damage to be sustained. If there be no future state, we are all *equal*; if there be, where shall the *ungodly* and the *wicked* appear?

BUT I am to remember I am speaking to *believers*, and so our want of *consideration* is our ruin. We in a sense believe, but do not lay to heart, what we acknowledge to be true: Either our minds are so sunk in sloth and indolence, or amus'd with trivial pursuits, or immers'd in business, that they are not in a condition to attend to the things which are *not seen, which are eternal*; and we are in a way to be as effectually undone for want of *thought*, as we should be for want of *faith*. But sure if these things are true, they deserve to be consider'd, and must be own'd of importance enough to engage our attention; and if that attention be not in proportion to the weight, are we not, in the language of

Moses,

Moses, foolish people and unwise. What wonders would the proper admittance of this thought work! "I must repent at God's call now, or be out of the reach of his compassion for ever." But,

LET me change the scene, and set the matter before you in a more agreeable light. It is fairly intimated in my text, that if we hear God, he will hear us; and what vast encouragement is there in such an expectation, especially when there are such express promises to support it? The *Psalmist* tells us, that *the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry*, Pf. xxxiv. 15. 1 Pet. iii. 12. Isa. lviii. 9. *Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.* The promise is as sure as the threatening, being uttered by God, *that cannot lie.* He that has said of those who *bate the good, and love the evil; Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them, he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings*, Micah iii. 2, 4. The same true and faithful God has assur'd the seed of Jacob that they shall not seek

his face in vain ; Isa. lxv. 19. And how precious is the promise? Psal. xci. 15. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him ; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and hear him. And how full is the whole book of God of declarations to this purpose ! And can this consideration fail of being effectual, if it be really believ'd, and duly consider'd.

LET *us therefore bear the conclusion of the whole matter ; Fear God, and keep his commandments. To this purpose wisdom cries, and understanding puts forth her voice. Do not let us flatter ourselves---to hear is to obey ; and without it, whatever pretences we make, we do but condemn God, and we have heard how he will resent it. People in prosperity may perhaps set light by both the threatning and the promise. They have no changes, therefore they fear not God. But let me put such in mind, that they live in a changing world, and know not what a day may bring forth, or a night produce : You know not what shall be in the morrow. This you may depend upon, that man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble, Job xiv. 1. You have reason to expect your share of it, unless something*

something more terrible, even untimely death, prevent it. Be persuaded therefore to hearken to the call of God, as ever you expect he should hear your cries in the troubles of life and agonies of death: As ever you hope to escape in that day when the disobedient of all ranks, high and low, rich and poor, together, will call upon the *mountains and rocks to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of the lamb, and him that sitteth upon the throne*: As ever you propose to escape that place, where you *shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit*; and from whence you shall not be released till you have *paid the uttermost farthing*: As ever you hope to *stand in judgment, and in the congregation of the righteous*, and be admitted inhabitants of that world, where the cries of God will be turned into commendations of the *good and faithful servants*, and theirs into shouts of joy, and songs of praise, with which the regions of the blissful world shall ring for ever.

BUT what you do, do *quickly*; make haste, and delay not. Do not say, to-morrow I will hear, repent, reform, for ye know not where you shall be to-morrow. *Now is the accepted time,*

30 *A Serious Exhortation, &c.*

time, now is the day of salvation. Before the light of another day, you may be in that place of torment, where God never calls, and from whence he never hears. *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts: Hear, and your souls shall live.* This will be your happiness, and therefore it is your wisdom. So be it.

F I N I S.



